

PREPARING FOR THE NEXT CENTURY IN  
MISSOURI'S PUBLIC SCHOOLS:  
EDUCATIONAL ISSUES FOR THE YEAR 2000

Prepared for the Missouri Opportunity 2000 Commission

By the Missouri Department of  
Elementary and Secondary Education  
Arthur L. Mallory, Commissioner of Education

October 1986

**PREPARING FOR THE NEXT CENTURY IN  
MISSOURI'S PUBLIC SCHOOLS:  
EDUCATIONAL ISSUES FOR THE YEAR 2000**

Prepared for the Missouri Opportunity 2000 Commission  
By the Missouri Department of  
Elementary and Secondary Education  
Arthur L. Mallory, Commissioner of Education  
October 1986

INTRODUCTION

America during the 1980s is experiencing perhaps the most profound educational reform movement in its history. Within the past three years, policymakers at the state and local levels have launched an unprecedented number of school reform initiatives designed to upgrade academic achievement of students; to strengthen the teaching profession; to assure greater accountability in public education; to expand educational opportunities for students and adults; and to assist schools in meeting the needs of our high-technology society.

The reform movement of this decade, however, is based to a large extent in the past. In many cases, for example, the reform measures now being contemplated and implemented are intended more to correct past problems than to prepare students, teachers and schools for tomorrow's realities. Therefore, as Missouri approaches the year 2000, schools face the dual challenge of institutionalizing recent reform initiatives, while simultaneously devoting more energy to strategic planning and developing needed programs for the future.

Our public schools have been catapulted, virtually overnight, into a new social, economic and political environment where high-quality education is viewed as a national security issue, not merely as a "quality-of-life" issue. After more than a decade of widespread public criticism and complacency about education,

schools now find themselves forced to adapt to a new climate of high expectations, high visibility, high technology, high accountability and high competition. In short, our educational system has entered "the era of excellence."

Today's educational reforms are ambitious, healthy and positive. The Excellence in Education Act of 1985, for example, has provided new tools, new incentives and new mandates which will stimulate constructive change throughout Missouri's public education system. This law is particularly noteworthy because it represents a comprehensive, rather than piecemeal, approach to school improvement. The law also includes virtually all of the measures recommended by the State Board of Education in its 1984 report, Reaching for Excellence: An Action Plan for Educational Reform in Missouri. Therefore, the Excellence in Education Act represents a consensus among Missouri's education policymakers and lawmakers about the most constructive and promising school improvement initiatives.

Missouri has not been as hasty as some other states to implement a statewide school reform plan, but this can be viewed as an asset. With the Excellence in Education Act, Missouri has developed a long-range plan for school improvement which is aggressive, yet practical and realistic. Some states, on the other hand, are already scrapping parts of their early school reform programs. We in Missouri should not make the same mistakes.

Missouri's current school reform initiatives are on the right track, but are probably insufficient to meet the challenges of the future or the rapidly changing conditions in our state and nation today. The new ideas and programs which are now beginning to take root, however, will undoubtedly shape Missouri's educational goals, priorities and policy options for the remainder of this decade and into the 1990s. Thus, the trends and concerns of today provide an essential context for considering future needs and priorities.

[We must face the future now.] Children in Missouri who begin kindergarten next year (1987) will receive their high school diplomas in the spring of the year 2000 (assuming, of course, that the current structure of elementary and secondary schooling does not change radically in the interim). Their future, the future of our public education system, and the future of our state are literally being determined now.

There are countless issues and problems, both philosophical and practical, to be debated as Missouri and its educational system prepare for the 21st century. [Despite the difficulty of predicting future needs and problems, it is clear we must make every reasonable effort to anticipate the future and to revamp our school system accordingly.] Millions of young people will pass through our public school system between now and the year 2000. [We cannot afford to provide them schooling which does not adequately prepare them to meet the demands of the future.]

This paper focuses on five broad issues which appear, from today's vantage point, to be of fundamental importance for Missouri educators and policymakers to consider as we prepare our schools and our children for the future. These issues are:

1. Changing Needs and Characteristics of Students
2. Parent and Community Involvement
3. New Curriculum, Technology and Teaching Methods
4. Excellence in Teaching
5. Rising Expectations and Accountability

#### **CHANGING NEEDS AND CHARACTERISTICS OF STUDENTS**

The "traditional" student population in public schools (kindergarten through grade 12) is changing significantly, and these changes may accelerate in the years ahead. Consequently, schools will need to modify current policies and programs to effectively serve student and community needs. Major issues in this area include:

--**Age.** The concept of "cradle to grave" learning is likely to become a reality by the year 2000. The "growth industries" in education are now in preschool programs (early childhood/parent education, day care, etc.) and adult-oriented services (vocational training and retraining, personal-enrichment courses, special programs designed for senior citizens, adult literacy programs, etc.). Although regular school enrollment is expected to be fairly stable for the next decade, schools should anticipate growing demand for nontraditional, community-oriented services. This trend will provide important opportunities for local schools to expand their services and involve segments of the population which do not have school-age children.

--**Racial/ethnic composition.** The proportion of Hispanic, Black, Asian and other minority-group students within the total school population is expected to increase significantly by the turn of the century. While this trend will be most apparent in urban areas, it will no doubt have implications for all school districts and for state-level education policy.

The racial/ethnic makeup of some Missouri school districts also will be affected by demographic changes in the state's urban areas. For example, the racial composition of suburban schools may change as minorities move out of the inner city and into surrounding areas. Because of such demographic trends, it is important to recognize that racial issues affecting education in the future may not be confined to the Kansas City and St. Louis school systems.

--**"At-risk" youth.** There is growing concern today about the special needs of certain groups of school-age youth: teenage parents; dropouts and potential dropouts; "latchkey" children; children from single-parent households; handicapped students; students with limited English proficiency, etc. Many of these students

have special learning problems and pose special challenges for the school system. Within some of the at-risk groups, a high proportion of students fail to complete school or have other unique problems. New strategies and programs are needed to prevent this waste of individual potential and to reduce the long-term social costs (unemployment and underemployment, dependence on public assistance, higher crime rates, etc.) often associated with at-risk children and youth.

### RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Local school districts should explore options and opportunities for serving new clients, especially in the preschool and adult areas. Greater use should be made of existing school facilities, perhaps through all-day and all-year programs which give all segments of the community more convenient access to educational services. Local schools also should consider developing a wider variety of cooperative, "off-campus" programs involving other local agencies, businesses and facilities.
2. There is immediate potential for schools to provide expanded services for preschool-age children and families through the new "Parents as Teachers" program, now being implemented by school districts across the state. Missouri should give priority to increased funding of this highly successful and promising program so that services can be made available more widely. The Parents as Teachers program should become an essential part of schools' efforts to identify children who are potentially at risk and to prevent many of the educational/social problems which occur later. (This program is discussed in more detail in the next section.)

3. "School-business partnerships," an idea which has become popular in many communities recently, should be encouraged and expanded. Such efforts, both formal and informal, provide new linkages among schools, school personnel, private-sector leaders, and other community agencies. Partnerships are an effective means of tapping local resources and finding creative solutions to unique local needs. Partnership-type activities can be a powerful catalyst in schools' efforts to broaden their programs and services in the community.
4. Missouri has a number of school districts with extensive, highly successful adult and community education programs, based either in regular school buildings or in area vocational-technical schools. These programs can serve as models for other districts to use in developing and marketing new services. State education officials also should provide leadership and coordination to encourage the expansion of adult- and community-oriented educational programs.
5. Vocational education programs in local high schools and area vocational-technical schools are an outstanding resource which can be used more fully. A growing number of vocational schools, for example, are enrolling adults in daytime job-training courses along with secondary students. Some schools offer a "double shift" of classes so that more students and adults can be accommodated. Many vocational programs also have the capacity to provide customized training services, if even on a small scale, to local businesses and agencies. Vocational education programs and facilities should be viewed not only as opportunities for students, but also as an economic development tool for the entire community.

6. State and local school officials, in cooperation with other agencies, should work together to expand and improve services for "at-risk" youth. Much greater emphasis should be placed on early identification and prevention as the most effective and economical means of assisting at-risk children, youth and families. The Children's Services Commission also could play a stronger role in promoting interagency cooperation to assist at-risk youth--both in and out of school.
7. An immediate priority for assisting at-risk youth should be the expansion of dropout-prevention programs, including earlier efforts to identify potential dropouts. While dropout-prevention often requires intensive services (counseling, academic tutoring, job-training, specialized staff, etc.), school-based services are the most cost-effective in reducing the dropout rate and related social costs. State-funded "incentive grants," authorized by the Excellence in Education Act of 1985, could provide funding to support special programs in the area of dropout prevention.
8. In the education of handicapped students, specifically, more attention needs to be focused on "transition"--helping handicapped students move successfully from school into adult life and productive employment. Over the past decade, enormous strides have been made in "mainstreaming" handicapped students and improving their educational opportunities. Recent national studies, however, indicate that 50-75 percent of disabled citizens in the U.S. are unemployed or underemployed two years after their schooling is completed. To help handicapped students realize their full potential and become contributing members of society, specialized assistance after school and in the workplace



may be required in most cases. Schools, private employers, sheltered workshops, the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation, and social-service agencies need to work together closely to assure successful transition from school for handicapped students. Much of the investment in special education services in our schools may be wasted if students do not receive needed support and follow-up services after school.

#### **PARENT AND FAMILY INVOLVEMENT**

It is often said that learning begins at home. There is no doubt that most of the traits and attitudes which contribute to success in school (self-discipline, good study habits, motivation to learn, good citizenship, honesty, etc.) must be fostered and reinforced in the home in order for schooling to be most effective. It is clear that many of these attitudes and values are firmly established before children typically begin the formal schooling process. Therefore, the family has a major responsibility to provide the foundation for future learning and academic success.

In conjunction with the school reform movement, educators and community leaders should seek new ways of encouraging greater parent/family support--and responsibility--for students' learning. Schools also need to be more flexible and creative in reaching out to parents--especially the "hard to reach" families who tend not to become involved in school activities or who may be distrustful of school authorities. Working parents, single-parent families and disadvantaged families need extra encouragement and support to become actively involved in their children's learning.

These goals cannot be achieved directly through policy or legislation, but they cannot be ignored. The success and vitality of our schools ultimately depend on the confidence which parents and the general public have in teachers as individuals and in the schools as institutions. Thus, one of the major challenges of the future is to see that parents and the public have a greater "stake" in the educational process.

#### RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Missouri should capitalize on the success of the exemplary early childhood/parent education program, "Parents as Teachers," now being implemented as a result of the Early Childhood Development Act of 1984. State funding provided for this program during 1986-87 (the second year of implementation) will enable Missouri school districts to serve approximately 20 percent of eligible families in the state. Funding for these services should be increased as quickly as possible in order to extend services to all families who are interested in taking advantage of the voluntary program. In addition to enhancing children's overall development and strengthening their school-related skills, the Parents as Teachers initiative offers a proven means of encouraging positive family involvement in their children's learning. By providing such practical services as home visits, group meetings for parents, and educational screening for children during the crucial early years (birth to age 3), schools can help forge a stronger home-school partnership and promote positive relationships which will be more likely to continue throughout the child's years of formal schooling.

2. Teachers and local school officials can provide valuable leadership in defining and clarifying values--honesty, respect for authority, self-discipline, standards of behavior, good citizenship, etc.--for children and youth. Such efforts are essential to the long-range solution of such problems as drug/alcohol abuse, teenage pregnancy, child abuse and neglect, delinquency, juvenile suicide and other personal/social issues. These complex issues are not "school problems," but local schools usually must deal with their consequences. By working closely with student leaders, parent groups, churches, community leaders and other agencies, schools can play a stronger role in promoting positive values and behavior among youth. Such efforts will not only clarify standards for students' behavior in school, but also will assist parents in reinforcing positive values, attitudes and habits at home.
3. Schools, parent groups and community leaders should seek new ways of promoting active parent involvement in education at the secondary level. Typically, parents tend to be most interested and involved in school activities of their younger children, but their participation often diminishes as children get older. In junior high and high school, for example, parents' involvement is often limited to extracurricular activities. The adolescent years, however, are a crucial time of transition and change --both educational and personal--for youth. Greater parent involvement should be encouraged during this period.

#### **CHANGES IN CURRICULUM, TECHNOLOGY AND TEACHING METHODS**

[ There are many different predictions about the kinds of changes needed for our educational system to remain in step with social, economic and global condi-

tions in the future. It seems clear, however, that significant changes both in the content and methods of teaching will be necessary as our schools adapt to a fast-changing world. ]Some of these transformations are already happening. Major issues and trends in this area include:

--**Curriculum and Content.** Debate in recent years has focused on the need to improve instruction in specific subject areas--science, mathematics, foreign languages, computer science, etc. Today, however, emphasis is shifting to concerns about ways to teach higher-order thinking skills, problem solving, independent learning, and decision making. Schools must adopt strategies which go beyond "basic skills" and provide greater emphasis on "learning to learn."

--**Technology.** The technology now being explored and adopted by schools (microcomputers, videodiscs, satellite communications, etc.) holds enormous potential for improving, enriching, streamlining and managing the educational process. Because they are adaptable to an individual student's pace and because they will enable teachers to manage more information about students and classes, computers can be a powerful tool for personalizing instruction. Today's new communication technologies will allow individual schools and classrooms to "plug in" to a vast network of outside resources. Rural schools especially should benefit from the ability to use electronic networking and telecommunications to expand access to educational resources--including instructors who can teach specialized classes from remote sites. High-technology devices also are expected to extend the capabilities of handicapped students and give them far greater access to educational opportunities.

A number of obstacles must be overcome, however, before the "high-tech revolution" is fully realized in education. These include capital costs of

computers and other equipment; lack of expertise among school personnel; rapid obsolescence of equipment; lack of quality software for instructional purposes; and incompatibility of products.

--**Teaching Methods.** Instructional practices need to be adapted not only to reflect new technology and a changing curriculum, but also to "match" instructional practices more closely to individual student's needs and abilities.

[ Traditional methods may need to be updated--or discarded--as schools implement the latest research about effective teaching and management practices. Teaching methods and organizational patterns also must change as schools raise academic expectations and adopt the philosophy that ALL students can learn successfully.]

Perhaps the most obvious implication of these trends involving curriculum, technology and teaching methods is that teachers and administrators throughout the state will require more and better inservice learning opportunities.

#### RECOMMENDATIONS

1. [ Missouri should aggressively pursue efforts to promote the use of "mastery learning" techniques in local schools. The research evidence about the power and effectiveness of this approach is clear and convincing. Based on the assumption that ALL students can learn well, mastery learning has been shown to produce equality of outcomes in student learning--a goal which goes far beyond equality of opportunity. ]

[ The Department of Elementary and Secondary Education has been encouraging local school districts, since about 1980, to adopt the mastery learning philosophy through a process called the "Instructional Management System." These efforts should be continued and intensified. The Excellence in

Education Act of 1985, with its requirement that schools use criterion-referenced tests to measure student progress on state-defined "key skills," incorporates much of the philosophy of mastery learning and should provide a powerful incentive for local schools to realign their curriculum and testing practices to reflect the "state of the art." ]

2. Resources should be provided for statewide leadership activities by the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, pilot projects by local school districts, and related staff-training programs to promote the expansion of mastery learning techniques. Such efforts are necessary to expand the nucleus of schools and educators using mastery learning methods, and such efforts require a very modest investment.
3. The Legislature should consider providing specific financial incentives to schools and/or school districts which demonstrate achievement gains through use of mastery learning strategies.
4. State education officials, in cooperation with local school districts, should provide leadership in developing model curricula and teaching activities which can be used to promote students' critical thinking and higher-order skills (reasoning, analysis, synthesis, writing, etc.). In this regard, the state may wish to consider expanding or strengthening such programs as the Missouri Scholars Academy for gifted students. The Academy provides a unique opportunity for training teachers as well as a "proving ground" for high-quality curriculum materials which can be adapted by schools statewide.

5. Missouri should consider additional efforts to provide financial assistance for school districts in the acquisition of computers, instructional software and related staff training. A state-funded program during 1985-86 provided \$2.4 million in one-time matching funds which enabled public schools to buy more than 7,000 new computers for classroom use. If provided on a continuing basis, such assistance would be an incentive for school districts to plan for the long-range expansion and refinement of computer-based instruction.
6. The state should consider providing financial support for research and development in the area of technological applications in education. This effort could involve cooperative efforts between state and local school officials to establish demonstration sites and training centers throughout the state. Such a program would provide a practical means for the state to work with national firms and agencies in the development of high-quality hardware and software. Statewide coordination and technical assistance in the use of technology may be particularly desirable now that Missouri has adopted "key skills" as an instructional standard for all school districts.
7. The state should investigate the long-range feasibility and potential cost-effectiveness of developing a telecommunications network which would link educational institutions throughout the state. For example, existing area vocational-technical schools or public colleges and universities could serve as sites for regional satellite "down-links" that could be used for a variety of purposes (professional meetings, courses for students, staff-development workshops for local school personnel, programs conducted by state education officials, resource centers, etc.). Such teleconferencing not only offers the possibility of faster communications, but also significant savings in time and travel costs, both at the state and local levels.

8. To enhance inservice training opportunities for teachers and administrators throughout the state, Missouri should consider expanding projects such as the "Leadership Academy," the administrator-training program created by the Excellence in Education Act. During its first year of operation (1985-86), the Leadership Academy proved to be highly effective and popular by serving more than 1,000 local principals and superintendents in the application of recent "effective schools research." The Academy is a model for training programs which could provide more timely, practical and convenient professional growth opportunities for teachers and administrators alike.
9. Special grants should be considered for schools and/or school districts which make a commitment to carry out local improvement plans. The potential value of such funding is emphasized by the early success of the Leadership Academy. Small grants to cover local staff-training, release time for faculty, curriculum-development projects, hiring consultants, etc., would encourage schools to follow through with the implementation of lasting school improvement programs.
10. New programs and policies are needed to provide school districts with the incentive and flexibility to carry out meaningful staff-training programs. Too often, current efforts in this area are haphazard, short-lived and ill-funded. In comparison with the private sector, for example, schools typically provide few training options for classroom teachers and administrators. Extended contracts for professional staff may be one means of eliminating the disincentives often inherent in after-school and weekend training programs.



## EXCELLENCE IN TEACHING

In Missouri and throughout the country, standards and expectations are now being raised for the teaching profession. At the same time, there are increasing signs that a teacher shortage could become widespread within the next decade. For the moment at least, Missouri is not experiencing a general teacher shortage, although there are isolated exceptions in some regions of the state and in some teaching specialties. Our concern, however, must be for the long term.

The average classroom teacher in Missouri today has taught for 14 years. If current turnover rates continue, half of the professional staff in the state's public schools will retire or leave the profession for other reasons by the mid-1990s. The crucial question facing our state is whether there will be enough qualified people ready--and willing--to become teachers in the next decade.

Issues related to teachers and teaching are the crux of the nationwide school reform debate today. As the Missouri State Board of Education emphasized in its 1984 Action Plan, "Any reform program Missouri adopts will be meaningless without well-trained, devoted teachers to carry it out."

Recent reports by groups such as the Carnegie Foundation's Task Force on Teaching as a Profession, the "Holmes Group" (representing leaders in higher education), and the Education Commission of the States have focused new attention on problems within the teaching profession nationally. These reports give new momentum to efforts aimed at strengthening the teaching profession both at the state and national levels, and these efforts may have significant implications for Missouri.

All of the recent debate and recommendations ultimately focus on four central issues which must be addressed in our future efforts to assure excellence in teachers and teaching:

- oRecruiting and retaining better-qualified teachers.
- oImproving teachers' earning and career-growth potential.
- oUpgrading the initial training of teachers.
- oEnhancing teachers' prestige and professional standing.

Missouri is addressing most of these issues now as a result of the state's elimination of "life certificates" for teachers (effective in 1988) and because of important provisions of the Excellence in Education Act. These efforts must be monitored closely to assure their success. In addition, it will be essential for state education officials and lawmakers to carefully watch national trends in this area and assess the potential impact of these trends on state policies.

#### RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Missouri should pursue its own state-based system for approving teacher training institutions; establishing entry- and exit-level testing standards for prospective teachers; and establishing specific certification standards for teachers and administrators. While recent reports have called for a national program or process for testing and certifying prospective teachers, this area has traditionally been controlled by the states. Missouri is now strengthening its policies, procedures and standards in regard to teaching, and these initiatives should be given an opportunity to work. At this time, Missouri's cooperative policymaking system--involving the Legislature, the State Board of Education, the Missouri Advisory Council of Certification for Educators (MACCE) and higher education officials--is functioning effectively. This state-based system is likely to be more flexible and responsive to changing needs in the future than a "national board" or other centralized authority.

2. Missouri should establish rigorous standards for testing, certification and recertification as recent mandates are implemented. State law enacted in 1984, for example, will eliminate life teaching certificates after September 1, 1988. As a result, the State Board of Education is now developing new policies which will require teachers and administrators to seek periodic recertification. As part of the recertification process, professional educators must be required to demonstrate satisfactory performance as well as continued education.

As a result of the Excellence in Education Act of 1985, prospective teachers will be required (beginning in 1988) to pass an entry-level test in order to be admitted to a professional educational program and to complete an "exit-level assessment" prior to certification. The State Board of Education should establish demanding standards at these "checkpoints." Raising such standards is an essential part of the long-range effort to boost prestige and professionalism within teaching. Moreover, the qualifications and criteria established for prospective and practicing teachers should reflect our high expectations of teachers. "Minimum competency testing" is incompatible with the goal of improving teachers' professional status.

3. State and local officials should encourage the expansion of Missouri's new "career ladder" program for teachers, principals and librarians in public schools. Although participation in the voluntary program is relatively low during its first year (1986-87), it should be evaluated carefully, modified if necessary, and expanded to more school districts and individuals in coming years. Because the career ladder combines performance appraisal with greater

recognition of teachers' professional contributions to their students and their districts, the progressive salary supplement connected with the program provides an attractive incentive for experienced teachers to remain in the classroom. School districts should be encouraged to evaluate their career ladder efforts carefully and to share ideas about effective procedures and policies.

4. One of the most promising aspects of the Excellence in Education Act of 1985 is its provisions (effective in 1988) regarding assistance for beginning teachers. Under the law, school districts are required to provide on-the-job assistance to beginning teachers during their first two years in the classroom and to prepare a "professional development plan" for each teacher. Each school is to have a professional development committee involved with these activities. The law also requires faculty members of teacher training institutions to provide follow-up assistance to their graduates and to have direct involvement with public schools on a regular basis. State and local school officials, in cooperation with personnel in higher education institutions, should take steps to assure that these new policies are implemented effectively.

These new policies and requirements can be positive and beneficial in several ways. They incorporate some aspects of the concept of an "internship" for new teachers. While this approach implies closer supervision and evaluation of beginning teachers, it also means they should receive more useful guidance from school officials and/or master teachers. The provisions for involvement of college and university faculty members should improve communication

between local schools and teacher training institutions, and thereby help upgrade professional education programs. Overall, these initiatives can do a great deal to encourage collegiality and an improved working environment for professional educators.

5. Missouri should press ahead toward full implementation of the minimum salary plan included in the Excellence in Education Act. The law calls for raising the minimum salary to \$18,000 for all teachers by 1988. That effort is beginning this year (1986-87) with a state minimum of \$15,000. The goal set forth in the law is for the "floor" to rise by \$1,000 each year until the \$18,000 target is achieved. This is a supplemental program, with state funds paying for the difference between a school district's current salary schedule and the required state minimum for eligible employees. This effort should be viewed as an important part of the state's long-range strategy to improve teachers' salaries and to make the teaching profession more attractive. Through this relatively small investment of funds, the state can take a major step in assuring greater equity in teachers' salaries across the state and--perhaps even more importantly--send an important message to prospective teachers of the future.
6. State officials should carefully evaluate the effect and the potential value of the "five-year plan" recently adopted by Northeast Missouri State University for its education majors. Under this program, the first of its kind in the state, prospective teachers will be required to earn a four-year liberal arts degree. They will become eligible for certification after completing a fifth year of professional education studies and earning a

master's degree. This approach is now used in a few other states and is being recommended for wider adoption by various national panels. This approach may be worth considering on a wider scale in Missouri.

7. Missouri should explore "alternative" methods of teacher certification which would allow persons qualified in particular fields (science or foreign language, for example) to teach, even though they lack professional training as teachers. In the future, there will be a growing number of retired professionals who could be a rich resource for local schools. An individual who is an expert in his or her field, however, will not necessarily be an effective teacher. Therefore, any type of "alternative" certification program should include provisions for special short-term training and on-the-job supervision to assure that candidates can function effectively in the classroom.
8. Other issues related to teaching should continue to receive careful state-level attention in the future. For example, while enrollment is stable or declining in many districts and average class sizes are declining as a result, the state should not lose sight of the goal of reducing maximum teacher loads--especially in the primary grades and perhaps in certain other priority areas. A concerted effort to reduce pupil-teacher ratios, of course, could create a need for new school facilities and thereby increase financial demands on local school districts. The state also may wish to develop policies and funding procedures which would enable local schools to make greater use of paraprofessionals and teacher aides.

9. Missouri should continue its efforts to improve teachers' salaries and should strive to increase the state's average to at least the national average. The national average is not a "magic number," but it is a reasonable and desirable short-term goal. In addition, by matching or exceeding the national average salary for classroom teachers, Missouri will be in a better position to compete for teachers in an increasingly competitive market.

#### EXPECTATIONS AND ACCOUNTABILITY

It is obvious that more specific and stringent standards are being adopted for students, teachers and schools as a result of the current school reform movement in America. Lawmakers are requiring greater accountability from educators and educational institutions in return for increased funding. [Government and the private sector are demanding greater productivity and accountability so that students (including adults) are academically prepared to enter jobs or the military and are trained in light of actual labor market needs.] Private business is entering the educational marketplace, offering a variety of for-profit services ranging from developmental preschool to college-prep tutoring. These trends illustrate the rising demands and expectations which schools face today and will no doubt continue to face in the years ahead. [Because of such trends, public schools will be forced, inevitably, to become more accountable, more competitive and more results-oriented.]

[In order for the educational community to respond effectively to fluid economic conditions and changing priorities in the future, new methods or structures must be developed to allow government and the private sector to define, clarify and communicate their expectations for schools. One of the most persistent problems throughout the history of education has been the lack of agreement about

the proper "mission" of education. Today's school reform debate is helping to clarify priorities for our schools and provide a more sharply defined sense of "mission." Nonetheless, it is often difficult to translate public attitudes and changing political priorities into workable policies which provide direction for the educational establishment.

Therefore, it is important to seek improved communication and cooperation among education, political, business and civic leaders (both at the state and local levels). Such cooperation can help provide a guiding consensus about the roles, responsibilities and priorities of our schools.

Within the educational system itself, new methods and measures of assuring accountability need to be developed and perfected. The types of information presently available to parents, local boards of education, state policymakers and federal officials often fail to provide adequate answers about current student performance or future needs.

In the rush to adopt new testing and accountability measures, however, we must guard against letting the tail wag the dog. An effort currently is underway at the national level to develop new testing procedures which will allow for more detailed and accurate comparisons of state-by-state performance in education. Like most other states, Missouri is in the process of extending its student-testing mandates to provide more consistent statewide data about student performance and progress. Local school districts are under pressure to test more students, more often and for more specific purposes. In view of these trends, we must recognize the potential danger of over-testing and overlapping requirements for testing. Testing should be viewed primarily as an instructional tool to benefit teachers and students--not as a means of "keeping score" among schools or states. Policy-makers must recognize the limitations of formalized testing and strike an appropriate balance.



Rising public expectations, new services being provided by schools and reform measures now being implemented will undoubtedly increase the cost of schooling in the future. Everything from rising teachers' salaries and insurance premiums to the cost of better textbooks and computer software will require that we make a steadily increasing investment in public education. It is clear, however, that it will be difficult to secure the necessary additional financial support which our schools require (either at the state or local levels) unless schools demonstrate greater accountability.

#### RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Missouri should develop a school-evaluation process which goes beyond the present classification system (AAA, AA and Unclassified) and includes measures of academic performance or "output." This approach was recommended by the State Board of Education in its 1984 Action Plan. The key skills testing program, required under the Excellence in Education Act, may well provide the kind of data needed for this new approach to school evaluation and accreditation.
2. Local schools should continue their efforts to implement and refine the performance based evaluation process now required for all professional school personnel. Missouri is one of the first and perhaps the only state in the nation to adopt a comprehensive and workable approach to effectively evaluating the performance of teachers and administrators. The performance based evaluation system should go a long way toward answering public concerns about the competence and performance of school employees.

3. High schools and area vocational-technical schools must plan more effectively so that job-training programs appropriately reflect labor market needs and trends. Obsolete programs should be phased out so that available resources can be targeted to areas of growth.
4. Vocational education programs should continue to place high priority on serving the needs of local businesses and industries and on providing "customized" training services where appropriate.
5. There must be closer coordination and articulation between the elementary and secondary education system and higher education institutions in our state. With higher admissions standards being adopted by colleges and universities, and with new testing and accountability measures being implemented at the college level, it is clear that standards and expectations will need to rise as well in our elementary/secondary schools.

#### CONCLUSION

In 1983, the National Commission on Excellence in Education issued a report titled A Nation at Risk. This "Open Letter to the American People" triggered the current school reform movement and revived the country's commitment to educational excellence. That report succinctly defined the challenges confronting every school and every state:

"Knowledge, learning and skilled intelligence are the new raw materials of international commerce and are today spreading throughout the world as vigorously as miracle drugs, synthetic fertilizers, and blue jeans did earlier. . . . Learning is the indispensable investment required for success in the 'information age' we are entering."

Assuring each Missouri citizen access to a quality education is the fundamental obligation of state government. That obligation must never be neglected, especially in the face of an uncertain future. As we try to prepare for the challenges of a new century, and as we strive to make more productive use of Missouri's most basic raw materials--the individual talent and potential of our citizens--our schools must play a vital and effective role.

[Education is not merely a "tool" which enables an individual to achieve economic self-sufficiency or to participate in our society as a competent citizen. Education, instead, is a pervasive and powerful influence on the quality of life of each citizen and community in our state. Education touches virtually every aspect of our personal, social and political life. It is the key to economic growth and stability; the basis of our state's ability to compete in the global marketplace of the future. Education is the fuel of progress and democracy.]

The quality of education provided for each new generation of Missourians indelibly molds the abilities, potential, character and aspirations of that generation. [Therefore, our public school system is the cornerstone of our state's "human infrastructure."] To assure a bright future for our children and grandchildren in the 21st century, we must carry out the educational reform measures now being adopted and plan wisely for the challenges and changes which lie ahead.

##